

# Nationalists Victorious In Lithuanian Election

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MOSCOW, Feb. 25 — The republic of Lithuania received a rousing push toward independence today as the Soviet Communist Party, put to the test in the Soviet Union's first free multiparty election in seven decades, was overwhelmingly rebuffed by voters.

The results of the first multiparty election since the earliest days of the Bolshevik Revolution saw the loyalists of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's Communist Party win only 7 of the 90 seats filled by voters finally given the luxury of choice.

Those seven victories were managed among the republic's non-Lithuanian minority. The Sajudis movement, which has pioneered the Lithuanian secession drive, swept a majority of the seats in the republic's parliament.

## Mandate for Independence

Leaders of the drive immediately stepped up their goals and claimed that full independence was attainable this year in the face of what they hailed as the "landslide" toppling of the Communist Party.

With the other Baltic republics, Estonia and Latvia, following closely behind Lithuania in defying the Kremlin, officials in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, say the next steps toward independence will be taken in the next few months.

With 90 of the parliament's 141 seats filled in the vote, Sajudis candidates won 72 seats, with more seats likely to come in run-off elections on March 11.



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Lithuanian voters rebuffed the Soviet Communist Party.

in the 51 districts where no candidate received a majority of the votes. The other seats were split among smaller parties and independents with some allegiance to the Sajudis organization.

There are about 3.6 million people in Lithuania, 80 percent of them ethnic Lithuanians. About 10 percent of the population is Russian and the rest of Polish or other European ancestry.

## Plan to End Communist Control

The plan of Sajudis strategists is to use their new parliamentary majority to name a new president and formally declare political independence to call an immediate end to the Communist Party's vast patronage monopoly over Lithuania's institutional life. After that, Lithuanian leaders hope to negotiate with President Gorbachev and the central Government on the details of a complete break.

Among today's victors was Algirdas Brazauskas, the republic's breakaway Communist chief, credited with leaping early to join the separatist drive and to confront Mr. Gorbachev with demands for an end to Moscow's pervasive control of the republic's economic and political life.

Mr. Brazauskas, who is thought to have a strong chance to be the new president as Lithuania heads toward independence, led a core of Communist leaders in the republic in forming the independent Lithuanian Communist Party, a breakaway faction that declared its independence of the central party's grip.

The new party succeeded in winning 22 parliamentary seats, 13 of those with the support of Sajudis, which is not a formal political party but an umbrella organization of pro-independence grass-roots groups.

## Rejection of Gorbachev's Plea

The vote amounted to a personal rejection of Mr. Gorbachev, who made visited Vilnius last month to plead with Lithuanians to remain loyal to the central party and the Kremlin.

While ruling out the use of military force, Mr. Gorbachev has asserted that secession, which is theoretically guaranteed by the Soviet Union's Constitution, must not be a unilateral action and must be subject to the views of the rest of the country.

The election results, from a turnout estimated at more than 70 percent of eligible voters, was the most forceful demonstration so far of the prevailing view of the Lithuanian people that the Soviet Union has never held legitimate authority over the republic since it was annexed in 1940.

Sajudis officials estimated that their supporters would control up to 100 seats in the new parliament and that a coalition of parties would make up the new government.

## Little Opposition to Secession

"I doubt that people opposed to independence will be welcomed in it," Algimantas Cekoulis, a breakaway Communist leader and Sajudis supporter, said at a news conference in Vilnius.

Among other parties, the newly legalized Social Democrats won 9 seats, the Christian Democrats 2 and the Green Party 2. The single largest bloc of 46 victors professed no formal party, running primarily as representatives of Sajudis and its pro-independence principles.